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June 6, 2016

Citizens of Catawba County:

I am pleased to present to you the Catawba County Fiscal Year 2016/17 budget. Consistent with the Board of Commissioners' goals, the budget strategically invests in education, public safety, economic development, and parks to enhance quality of life and harness the positive momentum of the local economy, while maintaining the current tax rate of \$0.575 cent per \$100 of valuation. Strategic investments include:

- Education –Public school current expense funding is increased by 3.8 percent per pupil, and CVCC current expense is increased by 3 percent. Additionally, capital funding for public schools is increased.
- Public Safety
  - Emergency Medical Services (EMS) – Two EMS crews established in Fiscal Year 2015/16 are annualized to help maintain the Board of Commissioners' 8-minute response time goal. An EMS Operations Supervisor is added to relieve shift supervisors of administrative, freeing their time to handle situations that occur on shift in a timely manner and to assist crews with complicated calls.
  - Sheriff – Two narcotics investigators are included to increase capacity for proactive narcotics investigations.
  - Justice Public Safety Center (JPSC) – Increased operating costs and positions to support the expanded JPSC scheduled to open in spring 2017 are included, funded by the ¼ cent sales tax approved by voters in 2007.
  - Animal Control – A Chief Animal Control Officer is added to deal with a growing caseload and complex cases such as animal bites and animal cruelty.
- Economic Development – The budget continues support for economic development efforts spearheaded by the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and conducted in partnership with municipalities including business incentives, NC Data Campus development, and water and sewer infrastructure needs and planning. Investments in Building Inspections and Environmental Health staff will contribute to the County's business-friendly environment by ensuring responsive permit turn-around times.
- Parks – Planning and design of Mountain Creek Park in southeastern Catawba County will be completed in the coming year, and a grant application will be submitted to the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund to begin Phase 1 development, matched by funds donated by the developer of Villages at Sherrills Ford. Funds are included to pursue the lease-purchase of land adjacent to Riverbend Park for future development. The budget also increases funding to the Catawba County Historical Association (CCHA) to initially assist in purchasing property adjacent to Bunker Hill



Covered Bridge and in future years to be used as CCHA sees fit, to preserve the County's history and promote it to the public.

I encourage you to explore the budget, particularly the County Manager's budget message, to learn more.

I thank my fellow County Commissioners and the citizens of Catawba County for their trust in and support of our continued efforts to meet our community's needs.

Sincerely,

CATAWBA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Randy Isenhower". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Randy" being more prominent than the last name "Isenhower".

Randy Isenhower, Chair

